

**Introductory remarks for Mme Maureen O'Neil
for the Launch of *Human Development in South Asia 2002***

May 29, 2003

from 14:00 to 16:00

IDRC

14th Floor

**Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon, and
welcome to IDRC.**

**Mesdames et messieurs, bonjour et bienvenue au
CRDI.**

C'est avec grand plaisir que nous collaborons encore cette année avec l'Agence canadienne de développement international, l'ACDI, et le très renommé *Mahbub Ul Haq Human Development Centre* au lancement de l'excellent rapport de ce dernier, le *South Asia Human Development Report*, qui porte cette année sur l'agriculture et le développement rural. Un thème que nous savons tous et toutes être d'une importance primordiale.

C'est aussi un privilège pour nous d'accueillir Mme Khadija Haq, Présidente du *Mahbub Ul Haq Human Development Centre*.

**Indeed, it is a great privilege for us to welcome
Dr. Khadija Haq, President of the *Mahbub Ul
Haq Human Development Centre*.**

IF SHE IS STILL COMING-----

**It is also an honour to have the Honourable
Susan Whelan, Minister of International
Development, join us a bit later this afternoon.
Minister Whelan will join us around 3:30 and
will share a few words with us.**

We also have with us this afternoon our colleague from CIDA, Dr. Hau Sing Tse, Vice President of the Asia Branch, and my good friend Dr. Elliott Tepper, Coordinator of the South Asia Seminar Series and associate professor at the University of Carleton.

It is a pleasure to collaborate with you both on the launch of this impressive report.

The report is excellent! And I would like to warmly congratulate Dr. Haq and her associates for producing such a comprehensive review.

The wealth of data you have collected will be of great value to policymakers and academic researchers. The *Mahbub Ul Haq Human Development Centre*, each year produces an extremely useful report. Thus, the amazing work of Mahbub ul Haq lives on.

When Mahbub ul Haq founded the Human Development Centre in Pakistan, he, along with Khadija Haq and a group of Asian professionals all in their twenties, began to produce the Human Development Reports for South Asia.

It is this tradition of strengthening and using the research capacity of developing countries that has allowed the production of this current edition, *Agriculture and Rural Development*. IDRC – as, I am certain, all of you -- finds resonance with an approach to sustainable development that places high emphasis on building local research capacity.

As already highlighted by Dr. Tepper in his letter of invitation, this year's report presents an in-depth analysis of the experience of five South Asian countries (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka).

The report argues that a significant challenge facing the region is the creation of a system of agriculture and rural development that is both growth-oriented and human-centred. And we all support that approach.

The report stresses that development priorities must focus on where the majority of people live (rural areas) and in what occupations they work (both farm and non-farm sectors) for meaningful human sustainable development to take place.

We also all agree that research is important, but that it is not sufficient. Research has to be done in a way such that the poor can readily benefit from its results. One way to achieve this is by making sure that the research agenda specifically addresses needs expressed by the communities, and that the people themselves are involved in the research activities.

We, at IDRC, can confirm the pertinence of the approach proposed by the *Human Development in South Asia 2002 Report*.

Several of our programs support research projects that bring together communities and researchers, and communities and researchers with decision-makers – participatory research.

Together they develop approaches and solutions that are realistic and sustainable. This is possible because the researchers, the communities, and the decision-makers identify problems jointly. Solutions agreed upon by all partners are then easier to implement. They are all the more so when supported by evidence-based, enabling policies.

The report also highlights the importance of involving an important group in the successful implementation of participatory research: women. As stressed in the report, in South Asia, the proportion of women involved in agriculture exceeds that of men. Women also perform more tasks than men.

What is extremely worrisome is that the female labour force in agriculture is expanding and these women represent a growing percentage of the poor.

The cause is this: Rising poverty has led men to move to the cities in search of employment, leaving the women behind to work the land. The increasing number of small land holdings makes it difficult to hire additional workers, forcing female family members to fulfill labour requirements. And worse, while their role in agriculture is increasing, women are still generally denied the right to own land.

This has especially caught my attention because, just yesterday, the well-known Dr. Naila Kabeer, Professor Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, was here to talk to us about her new book entitled: *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals*. This handbook is dedicated to policymakers. And I think it should be a “must read” for policymakers involved in gender issues. As is the case for the *Asia Development Report*, it should be read by all policymakers in Asia.

Once again, congratulations to the Mabbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre for publishing such an insightful study. And thank you for choosing the Centre for the launch of this very stimulating report and for giving us an opportunity to reflect on how research and knowledge can help South Asia.

Merci beaucoup!